The Dark Side of Adaptive Selling

Abstract

This study investigates the potential existence of a dark side of Adaptive Selling (AS). In sharp contrast with the literature on AS, which almost invariably assumes that AS should positively affect performance, we argue that the consequences of AS on the customer are affected by many contingencies. After reviewing the literature on AS, we identify a number of relevant knowledge gaps and empirically explore the impact of Adaptive Selling (AS) on an important relational outcome, customer trust. More specifically, we study how customers react when they perceive that a salesperson is both adaptive and selling oriented (SO). We find that this combination has a negative impact on trust of the salesperson. Furthermore, we investigate how these consequences of the interplay of AS and SO are moderated by two situational variables, length of the relationship between the buyer and the seller, and importance of the purchase for the customer. Finally, implications and limitations of our study are discussed.

Keywords: *Trust; Adaptive selling; Selling orientation; Situational variables; Empirical study*.

The Dark Side of Adaptive Selling

Introduction

Adaptive Selling (AS) is a key construct in the sales literature. AS is the extent to which salespeople engage in planning to determine the suitability of sales behaviours and activities that will be undertaken, the capacity to engage in a wide range of selling behaviours and activities, and the alteration of sales behaviours and activities in keeping with situational considerations (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Despite the large number of studies investigating the nature, drivers and consequences of AS, we see some important gaps in the literature.

First, some doubts exist about the impact of AS on performance. Consistent with the contingency model of salespeople's effectiveness (Weitz, 1981), scholars posit a positive link between AS and sales performance, since, for example, adaptations in sales interactions help salespeople customize the content and format of their messages, which in turn increase communication effectiveness by improving rapport and the handling of objections. Research largely concludes that AS improves salesperson performance (e.g. Giacobbe *et al.*, 2006; Spiro and Weitz, 1990). This conclusion is also supported by the meta-analytic findings of Franke and Park (2006). However, in keeping with Spiro and Weitz (1990, p.67) who argued that "the relationship between ADAPTS and performance is inconclusive", Romàn and Iacobucci (2010, p.370) recently noted that "the literature on the effect of adaptive selling behaviour on performance seems to present mixed results".

These mixed results are especially true if we consider the few studies investigating customers' reactions to the use of AS. For example, Rapp et al. (2006) predicted a direct positive effect of working smart (a construct that includes AS) on customer perceptions of service, but their data did not support the relationship. Hartline and Ferrell (1996, p. 61) found no evidence of a relationship between employee adaptability and customers' perceived service quality, which they suggested was due to a problem in operationalization: "the conceptualization and measurement of adaptability may not match the way customers perceive employee adaptability." Contrary to these findings, Romàn and Iacobucci (2010) found that AS behaviour has a direct and positive effect on a customer's perceptions of satisfaction with the product and with the salesperson, which in turn enhance customer anticipation of future interaction with the salesperson. Importantly, however, the authors used AS behaviour *as perceived by the salesperson, not by the customer.*

In fact a **second** major limitation in the literature on AS is that the vast majority of studies on AS are based on evaluations provided by sellers, not by customers. In their meta-analysis on the consequences of AS, Franke and Park (2006) included 26 empirical studies examining the relationship between AS and salespeople's self-reported performance, 6 studies investigating the relationship between AS and manager-rated performance, and 14 studies considering the relationship between AS and objective performance. Importantly, they did not examine a single study investigating customers' reactions and concluded that "adaptive selling behaviour (ASB) is related more to self-rated performance than to manager-rated or objective performance" (p.699). Giacobbe et al. (2006) summarized the findings of 27 empirical studies on AS behaviour, all based on samples of salespeople. Romàn and Iacobucci (2010) listed 20 empirical studies on AS, and only in one study customers were used as respondents. The authors noted (p.364) that "Studies which focus on the salesforce's perceptions of their own constructs … are biased".

We argue that adaptation can be driven by different and sometimes opposite reasons, e.g. for genuinely trying to find the best solution for the individual customer's needs but also to close a sale at any cost. In other words, adaptation may be based on good intentions (i.e. satisfy customer needs) but may also be used as a manipulative tactic. In both cases, if one takes the perspective of the seller, AS increases performance, since it helps the salesperson reach his/her goals. Therefore, it is expected that studies using self-reported measures provided by salespeople or supervisors' assessment of their sales force behaviours will find a positive association between AS and performance. However, if one takes the perspective of the customer, then the relationship between his/her *perception* of AS by a salesperson and the response of the customer largely depends on the customer's attribution of meaning to that behaviour. More specifically, since the customer may perceive adaptation as either in his/her interest or in the seller's interest (i.e. to close the deal at whatever cost), the impact of AS on customer trust in the salesperson is not so obvious. In short, it is the customer's interpretation of the reason behind the practice of AS which will influence his/her reaction to it. Hence, studying customer perceptions of AS is interesting both for researchers and managers, and deserves further attention because most of the research on the topic used self-reported evaluations provided by salespeople and sales managers.

We suggest that when customers perceive that a salesperson is altering "sales behaviours during a customer interaction (or even across customer interactions) based on perceived information about the nature of selling situation" (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan, 1986, p. 175), they don't necessarily always have a positive reaction. If one takes the perspective of customers and focuses on the impact of AS on customer trust, it may be that AS is perceived as a manipulative tactic that does not evoke trust. Interestingly, in keeping with this assertion, in one of the few studies investigating buyers' perceptions about AS, DelVecchio et al. (2004) found that buyers perceive some selling tactics (e.g. closed-influence methods) as manipulative, whereas they see open-influence methods as consultative. On this basis, the authors concluded that only some tactics should be part of the adaptive salesperson's repertoire and argued (p.870) that in the era of relationship selling the salesperson should "change the ways he or she helps the customer, rather than adapt the methods he or she uses to convince the customer".

Accordingly, we note that a **third limitation** of the AS literature is that it has largely overlooked the impact of this selling behaviour on long-term, customer relational outcomes. In fact, as pointed in Franke and Park's (2006) meta-analysis, extant research on AS has primarily used short-term consequences such as sales performance. However, in the current era characterized by a strong emphasis on relationship selling the effects of AS not only on a salesperson's outcome performance, but also on long-term oriented customer relational outcomes should be investigated (Romàn and Iacobucci, 2010). In the context of customer relationships with salespeople, trust is a key component of the difference between "spurious" and "true" relationships between customers and sellers (Liljander and Roos, 2002). In their meta-analysis on relationship marketing, Palmatier *et al*. (2006) found that the interpersonal relationships between customers and sellers' contact employees are a key driver of the organization's relational outcomes and that trust is one of the key relational mediators. If the customer feels that the salesperson is manipulative in terms of doing and saying whatever it takes to get the sales, then clearly the customer will not trust the salesperson. If the customer believes that the salesperson has his/her best interests in mind, then that establishes a basis for trusting that salesperson. Therefore, in the present study we use trust as the focal dependent variable.

A **fourth limitation** in the extant literature on AS is that most studies have not investigated the simultaneous impact of AS and other behaviours on the performance of salesperson. This s disappointing, since, as noted for example by Churchill et al. (1985) in their meta-analysis on the drivers of sales force performance, no single factor is likely to explain a large proportion of sales performance variability. In fact, during and across encounters with a salesperson, customers typically make an overall assessment of the seller. For example, as far as the drivers of customer trust in the salesperson are concerned, the meta-analysis by Swan *et al.* (1999) identified 49 potential antecedents of interpersonal trust investigated in the literature. Hence, investigating the impact of AS in isolation provides only a partial picture. Our argument is that a customer's reaction to salesperson's AS may be contingent upon his/her perception of the presence (or absence) of other be behaviours. The impact of AS on the customer may vary depending on wether or not it is matched by other relevant behaviours.

One such behaviour is Selling Orientation (SO), which is a sub-dimension of the SOCO scale developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) to measure a salesperson's customer orientation (CO) and selling orientation (SO). Saxe and Weitz (1982) defined customer-oriented selling as the degree to which salespeople try to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs. Thus highly customer-oriented salespeople avoid actions which sacrifice customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale. The selling orientation corresponds to a low level of customer orientation in a salesperson (Saxe and Weitz 1982). More specifically, this orientation involves a company centered approach rather than a client centered approach. This orientation generally ignores customer needs in favor of making the immediate sales. Periat, LeMay and Chakrabarty (2004, p. 53) observed that their literature review on SOCO "revealed a dearth of research on selling orientation." Similarly, Harris, Mowen and Brown (2005, p. 31), suggest "work that more clearly delineates the selling orientation construct would be beneficial". Hence, analyzing the impact of SO on customer trust contributes to fill a relevant gap in the literature.

A fifth limitation in the literature on AS is the relatively small number of empirical studies investigating situational variables and contingencies affecting the adoption of AS. Even more important, few studies have investigated the impact of situational variables on the AS-performance link. This is disappointing because, as underlined by Weitz (1982) any relationship between ASB and sales performance is expected to be situationally sensitive. Some studies simply looked at situational variables as antecedents of AS by salespeople. For example, Bodkin and Stevenson (1993) found that years of sales experience, percentage of salary based on bonus and number of new accounts significantly influenced the degree to which salespeople engage on different types of AS behaviours (e.g. amount of sales call planning, customer and competitor information gathering, etc.). McFarland, Challagalla and Shervani (2006) showed that salespeople should use different influence tactics across different types of buyers. However, these studies did not investigate the impact of situational variables on the AS-performance relationship.

In our review of the literature, we only found three studies analyzing the role played by situational variables in the AS-performance relationship. Porter, Wiener and Frankwick (2003) found that the impact of AS on performance is affected by the selling situation: the authors demonstrated that the relationship between AS and performance is stronger in a modified rebuy and a new buy situation than in the case of a straight rebuy. Giacobbe et al. (2006) explored the impact of situational variables on the relationship between AS and performance and concluded that this relationship is positive under both "adaptive" and "nonadaptive" conditions, although in the latter situation the association is much weaker. Lastly, Chackrabarty, Brown and Widing (2010) analyzed the manner in which closed influence tactics (i.e. ingratiation) moderate the impact of AS on short-term and long-term salesperson goals. Interestingly, the authors found that closed influence tactics strengthened the positive effect of AS on short-term salesperson goals (e.g. market share and sales targets) but weakened the positive effect of AS on long-term salesperson goals (i.e. developing long-term relationships with the customer). This evidence seemingly suggests that AS may not always be productive when a relationship selling approach is pursued. In fact, the authors concluded (p. 23) that "smugglers of influence may win in the short run, but they are likely to lose in the long run". Again, a key limitation of these studies is that they used self-reported measures provided by salespeople, and not customer perceptions.

A **sixth limitation** in the literature on AS is that few studies have been run outside the US. This is unwelcome, especially because, for example, Herche, Swenson and Verbeke (1996) raised concern about the possibility of using scales of relevant selling constructs in other countries. Especially in the light of the increasing internationalization of companies, it seems necessary to examine AS and SO outside the US. In fact, to the best of our knowledge, very few studies have investigated AS and SO outside the US.

Development of Hypotheses

As noted above, one of the major limitations of the studies on AS is that they typically took the perspective of sellers, since they focused on self-assessments made by salespeople or supervisors' evaluations of the adoption and practice of AS in their sales force. We argue that, if one takes the perspective of customers, the impact of AS on buyers' trust depends on their attribution of meaning to the goals and reasons behind its adoption from the part the salesperson. Therefore, we argue that in and of itself, customer perception of AS will not necessarily drive to more trust in the salesperson:

H1: Customer perceptions of a salesperson's adaptive selling have no significant impact on customer trust in the salesperson.

The few studies on SO failed to demonstrate the hypothesis that SO negatively affects selected outcome variables. For example, Boles *et al.* (2001) reported that SO was unrelated to job performance and concluded that it may be that customers expect salespeople to engage in selling-oriented behaviours to some degree. Wachner, Plouffe and Grégoire (2008) found that SO has a positive impact on performance (although they expected SO to be negatively related to performance). Goff *et al.* (1997) found that SO had a negative association with customer satisfaction with the salesperson, but not with the firm as hypothesized. Finally, Tam and Wong (2001) found that SO was negatively related to customer trust only, whereas its hypothesized negative impact on customer satisfaction was not supported. Taken together, these results suggest that the impact of SO on customer responses deserves further investigation. As pointed out by Harris, Mowen and Brown (2005, p. 22), "the use of selling-oriented tactics runs counter to long term sales success". In fact, SO focuses on activities that may result in sales in the short term at the expense of customer satisfaction, because selling-oriented salespeople typically have a short-term time horizon, use manipulative tactics to close sales and focus on short-term goals, perhaps at the expense of the customer's true needs (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Hence:

H2: Customer perceptions of a salesperson's selling orientation are negatively related to customer trust in the salesperson.

Selling Orientation is typically seen as a form of "hard selling" approach associated with manipulative tactics aimed at maximizing the seller's interest even at the expense of the buyer. As such, SO can be interpreted as an opportunistic behaviour and a proxy of absence of benevolence. Therefore, it can be argued that if the customer perceives that the salesperson is simultaneously adaptive and selling oriented, his/her trust in the salesperson will decrease. That is, the customer may think that the salesperson is using adaptation as a form of manipulation just to close the immediate sale. Hence, the combined effect of the two behaviours will decrease customer trust:

H3: Customer perceptions of a salesperson's adaptive selling used in combination with a selling orientation are negatively related to customer trust in the salesperson.

As noted by Porter, Wiener and Frankwick (2003) and Giacobbe et al. (2006), when analysing situational variables affecting the impact of AS on performance (i.e. customer trust, in our case), two levels of contingencies should be considered: (1) the first-order contingencies, i.e. the salesperson's capability(s) and behaviour(s) during the sales interaction; and (2) the second-order contingencies, which capture the nature of the selling situation encountered by the salesperson. Therefore, in addition to investigating the impact of SO (an example of first-order contingency), in the spirit of an exploratory study we also analyzed the role played by two variables of the second type: length of the relationship between the buyer and the seller, and importance of the purchase for the customer. More specifically, we want to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How is the impact of customer perceptions of AS on customer trust in the salesperson affected by length of the relationship between the buyer and the seller, and importance of the purchase for the customer?

RQ2: How is the combined effect of AS and SO on customer trust affected by length of the relationship between the buyer and the seller, and importance of the purchase for the customer?

Empirical Study

Data collection and sample description. Data were collected in a major European country from a sample of 134 customers of one company in a B2B setting. Customers were asked to refer to a specific salesperson they interacted with from any of their suppliers. In the sample, 69% of respondents are male. Respondents are well distributed across different age groups (18-34: 19%; 35-44: 32%; 45-54: 20%; 55-64: 22%; 65 or more: 7%) and the average length of the interpersonal relationship between the buyer and the seller is 5.9 years.

Measures. To measure the extent to which salespeople engage in AS, we used the short version of the original Spiro and Weitz (1990) scale developed by Robinson et al. (2002). Importantly, in a recent study comparing alternative measures of AS, this scale was recommended as the best one (Chackrabarty et al., 2005). To measure the extent to which salespeople engage in SO, we adopted the 5 items of SO included in the short form of the Saxe and Weitz (1982)'s SOCO scale proposed by Thomas, Soutar, and Ryan (2001). Customer trust in the salesperson was measured using three items taken from Swan et al. (1988). We measured the length of the customer's relationship with that salesperson with a single item; purchase importance was also measured with a single item measure of the monetary importance of the transactions the customer does through the specific salesperson under consideration. Finally, we controlled for two additional variables: a four-item measure of the importance attributed to the salesperson when purchasing from suppliers, asking the customer to rate that specific salesperson's importance relative to 1) the image of the company, 2) the quality of the product, 3) price and 4) the quality of the service offered by the supplier, and a three-item measure of the salesperson's competence adapted from Hawes, Rao and Baker (1993). All scales employed a 7-point format, apart from the length of the relationship between customer and salesperson which is measured in months. Table 1 reports the correlations among the study variables, their properties and descriptive statistics.

Validity and reliability. Reliability analysis showed that all study variables had a Cronbach Alpha above the 0.7 threshold (see Table 1). After performing a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), two items were dropped from their original scales (one from SO and one from AS). CFA results indicated a reasonably good fit between the data and the estimated model: Chi-squared (degrees of freedom) = 275 (125); CFI = .90; NNFI = .87; RMSEA =.09). All items loaded significantly on the expected latent variable ($t \geq 5.88$) with no significant cross-loadings. One criterion for adequate discriminant validity is that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed the squared correlation between the construct and any other construct. This condition is satisfied in the present study as the lowest AVE (.39) is greater than the highest squared correlation (.31).

Analysis and results. To test our hypotheses we used multiple regression analysis with interaction terms. All variables involved in interactions were standardized. The values of variance inflation factors (VIF) reported in Table 2 suggest no major extent of multicollinearity. In order to properly interpret the coefficients of the three-way interaction terms, we included all possible combinations of two-way interactions in our estimated models. As a first step we estimated a baseline model including only the control variables; as a second step we entered the simple effects of AS, SO, importance of purchase and length of the relationship; finally we entered the two- and three-way interaction terms. In all cases, adding an additional block of variables significantly improved the model's fit. For sake of parsimony, we only report and comment upon the full models (see Table 2): Model 1 includes SO and importance of the purchase as moderators, while in Model 2 the moderators are SO and length of the relationship. Results indicate that the simple effect of AS on customer's trust in the salesperson is not significant (H1 is supported); in contrast, the simple effect of a SO in negatively related to trust (H2 is supported). As predicted, the interaction between these two selling approaches – AS and SO – is negatively and significantly related to trust (H3 is supported). As for the two situational moderators – length of the relationship and importance of the purchase- none of them displays a significant simple effect on customer's trust. Also, the two-way interactions of the two situational moderators with both AS and SO are not significant. However, the three-way interactions among AS, SO and purchase importance/length of the relationship are positive and significant. That is, the two situational variables reduce the negative effect of the combination of adaptation and SO on trust.

Discussion

Our study contributes in many ways to increase extant knowledge on the impact of AS on performance and, more specifically on customer trust, a relevant measure of long-term, relational outcome. First, ours is one of the first studies to analyze customer perceptions in order to investigate the benefits of AS. Our finding that customer perception of AS, in and of itself, has no impact on customer trust challenges most of the common wisdom on AS. Second, the finding that SO negatively affects customer trust is also important, especially in the light of the controversial findings on the consequences of SO and of the lack of knowledge concerning the drivers of mistrust and the negative drivers of trust (Swan *et al.*, 1999). Third, the finding that SO, in combination with AS, negatively affect trust, and that this negative impact is in turn influenced by situational variables (length of the relationship between the buyer and the seller, importance of the purchase for the customer) is extremely relevant to deepen our understanding of the role played by situational factors in moderating the AS-performance relationship. A further contribution of our study is that it provides researchers with a further validation (one of the very few outside the US) of the SO dimension of the parsimonious SOCO scale and of the short version of the ADAPTS scale. This meets the call for additional research on these measurement instruments made by Thomas, Soutar and Ryan (2001), Periat, LeMay and Chakrabarty (2004), Robinson et al. (2002), and Chakrabarty et al. (2005).

Implications for Researchers and Managers

In terms of research and managerial implications, our study challenges the widespread assumption that AS is inherently beneficial and should always be adopted to improve performance. In more detail, our findings suggest the following. First, the use of self-reported measures of AS and the use of salespeople or sales managers as respondents should be avoided or, at least, findings of studies using this research design should be interpreted with caution. Rather, we propose to investigate customer perceptions of AS and to use different performance measures (e.g. transactional satisfaction, customer trust, immediate purchase, etc.) to better understand the consequences of AS. We believe that the potential downturns of AS – its dark side - have been quite overlooked in extant research. Second, the impact of SO on different outcomes (again, both short-term and long-term oriented) should be investigated in more detail. Third, in future studies on the impact of AS on performance, we recommend to investigate the role played by situational factors.

From a managerial perspective, it is clearly important for salespeople to have the necessary skills to be able to adapt within and across sales interactions. However it is also important for sales managers to make salespeople aware of the potential pitfalls of adaption. If a salesperson is utilizing a SO, possibly in a transaction type of selling situation, adaptation may be perceived by the customer as manipulative. This research suggests that even within the context of relationship selling, the salesperson must be careful, particularly during attempts to gain commitment from the buyer, not to be so adaptive that the buyer will interpret his behavior as manipulative. Sales managers need to be cognizant of the strategies that their salespeople are using and insure that they are not adapting when they shouldn't. Both sales trainers and managers should develop training experiences to address the potential conflict.

Limitations

Our study presents limitations which should be acknowledged. We analyzed customers of one company only and the research design is cross-sectional: hence, any attempt to generalize the research findings and to theorize causal relationships must be undertaken with caution. Longitudinal studies would be useful in this regard. The model ideally should be tested on a larger sample of companies. The value of AVE for one of the constructs is less than ideal. In a broader sense, we call for contingency models aimed at investigating the conditions under which AS has a positive (or negative) impact on performance. Relevant moderators could be both personal characteristics and behaviours of salespeople as well as contextual variables. Other relevant control variables may be incorporated in future studies, too.

References

Boles, J. S., Babin B.J., Brashear T.A., Brooks C. (2001), "An Examination of the Relationships Between Retail Work Environments, Salesperson Selling Orientation-Customer Orientation and Job Performance*," Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, 9 (Summer), pp. 1-13.

Churchill G.A. Jr, Ford, N.M., Hartley, S.W., Walker O.C. Jr., (1985), "The Determinants of Salesperson Performance: A Meta-Analysis," Journal of Marketing, 22, 2, 103-118.

Delvecchio, S., Zemanek, J., McIntyre, R., Reid, C., (2004), "Updating the Adaptive Selling Behaviours: Tactics to Keep and Tactics to Discard," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 20, 7-8, pp. 859-875.

Franke, G. R., Park J.E. (2006), "Salesperson Adaptive Selling Behavior and Customer Orientation: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 43 (November), pp. 693-702.

Giacobbe R.W., Jackson D.W. Jr., Crosby L.A., Bridges C.M. (2006), **"**A Contingency Approach to Adaptive Selling Behavior and Sales Performance: Selling Situations and Salesperson Characteristic," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 115–142.

Goff, B. G., Boles J.S., Bellenger D.N., Stojack C. (1997), "The Influence of Salesperson Selling Behaviors on Customer Satisfaction," *Journal of Retailing,* 73, (Summer), 171-183.

Harris, E.G., Mowen, J.C., Brown, T.J., (2005), "Re-examining Salesperson Goal Orientations: Personality Influencers, Customer Orientation, and Work Satisfaction," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33, 1, pp. 19-35.

Hartline, M.D.,Ferrell, O. C., (1996), "The Management of Customer-contact Service Employees: An Empirical Investigation," *Journal of Marketing,* Vol. 60 (4), pp. 52-70.

Hawes J.M., Rao C.P., Baker T.L., (1993), "Retail Salesperson Attributes and the Role of Dependability in the Selection of Durable Goods," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, vol. 13, pp. 61-71.

Herche, J., Swenson, M.J., Verbeke, W., (1996), "Personal Selling Constructs and Measures: Emic Versus Etic Approaches to Cross-national Research," *European Journal of Marketing*, 30, 7, pp. 83-97(15).

Liljander V., Roos I. (2002), "Customer-relationships Levels – From Spurious to True Relationships," *Journal of Services Marketing,* Vol. 16, No. 7, pp. 593-614.

McFarland, R.G., Challagalla, G.N., Shervani, T.A., (2006), "Influence Tactics for Effective Adaptive Selling," *Journal of Marketing,* 70, 4, pp. 103-117.

Palmatier R.W., Dant R.P., Grewal D., Evans K.R., (2006), "Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 70, pp. 136-153.

Periatt, J. A., LeMay S.A., Chakrabarty S. (2004), "The Selling Orientation-Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale: Cross-validation of the Revised Version," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 24, 1 (Winter), pp. 49-54.

Porter, S.S., Wiener, J.L., Frankwick, G.L. (2003), "The Moderating Effect of Selling Situation on the Adaptive Selling Strategy–Selling Effectiveness Relationship," *Journal of Business Research*, 56, 4, 275-281.

Rapp, A., Ahearne, M. Mathieu, J., Schillewaert, N. (2006), "The Impact of Knowledge and Empowerment on Working Smart and Working Hard: The Moderating Role of Experience," International Journal of Research in Marketing, 23, 3, pp. 279-293.

Robinson L.Jr., Marshall G.W., Moncrief W.C., Lasek F. G., (2002), "Toward a Shortened Measure of Adaptive Selling,*, Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* vol. 22, pp. 111–119.

Román, S., Iacobucci, D., (2010), "Antecedents and Consequences of Adaptive Selling Confidence and Behavior: A Dyadic Analysis of Salespeople and Their Customers," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science,* 38, 3, pp. 363-382.

Saxe R., Weitz B.A., (1982), “The SOCO Scale: A Measure of the Customer Orientation of Salespeople,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 19, pp. 343-351.

Spiro R.L., Weitz B.A., (1990), “Adaptive Selling: Conceptualization, Measurement, and Nomological Validity,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol. 27, pp. 61-69.

Swan J.E., Bowers M.R., Richardson L.D., (1999), “Customer Trust in the Salesperson: An Integrative Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Literature,” *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 44, pp. 93-107.

Tam, J. L.M, Wong Y.H. (2001), “Interactive Selling: A Dynamic Framework for Services,” *Journal of Services Marketing*, 15, 5, pp. 379-396

Thomas R.W., Soutar G.N., Ryan M.M., (2001), “The Selling Orientation – Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale: A Proposed Short Form,” *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* Vol. 21, pp. 63-69.

Wachner, Trent, Christopher R. Plouffe, and Yany Grégoire (2008), “SOCO’s Impact on Individual Sales Performance: The Integration of Selling Skills as a Missing Link”, *Industrial Marketing Management, (forthcoming)*

Weitz B.A. (1981), “Effectiveness in Sales Interactions: A Contingency Framework,” *Journal of Marketing*, 45 (1), pp. 85-103.

Weitz B.A., Sujan H., Sujan M., (1986), “Knowledge, Motivation and Adaptive Behavior: A Framework for Improving Selling Effectiveness,” *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 50, pp. 174-191.

Table 1. Correlations, properties and descriptive statistics of the measures

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Customer's trust in the salesperson	1						
2	Adaptive selling	.33*	1					
3	Selling orientation	-.41*	0.06	1				
4	Importance of the salesperson for the customer	0.16	.35*	.27*	1			
5	Length of the customer-salesperson relationship	.31*	0.14	-0.09	0.16	1		
6	Salesperson's competence	.55*	.38*	-0.09	.28*	.30*	1	
7	Importance of the purchase for the customer	.47*	.31*	-0.17	.37*	.29*	.50*	1
	Mean	5.21	3.96	3.63	3.24	68.98	5.62	4.49
	S.D.	1.52	1.35	1.12	1.31	73.88	1.13	1.65
	Number of items	3	4	4	4	1	3	1
	Cronbach's alpha	0.94	0.88	0.72	0.81	n.a.	0.85	n.a.
	Average variance extracted	.86	.65	.39	.53	n.a.	.65	n.a.

* p<.01 (Two-tailed)

Table 2. Results of regression analysis

Dependent Variable = Customer's trust in the salesperson					
Model 1			**Model 2**		
	Stand. Beta (t-value)	**VIF**		**Stand. Beta (t-value)**	**VIF**
Length of the relationship	.01 (.24)	1.20	Importance of purchase	.07 (.93)	1.80
Importance of the salesperson	.13 (1.95)*	1.47	Importance of the salesperson	.17 (2.59)**	1.56
Salesperson's competence	.51 (7.29)***	1.71	Salesperson's competence	.55 (8.13)***	1.64
Adaptive selling	.07 (.10)	1.60	Adaptive selling	.00 (.00)	1.48
Selling orientation	-.39 (-6.39)***	1.27	Selling orientation	-.33 (-5.58)***	1.25
Importance of purchase	.04 (.65)	1.67	Length of the relationship	.03 (.48)	1.21
Adaptive * Imp. Purchase	.04 (.69)	1.38	Adaptive * Length	.00 (.07)	1.28
Adaptive * Selling orientation	-.21 (-3.56)***	1.17	Adaptive * Selling orientation	-.19 (-3.30)***	1.21
Selling orientation * Imp. Purchase	.06 (1.13)	1.14	Selling orientation * Length	.05 (.94)	1.19
Adaptive * Selling orientation * Imp. purchase	.17 (2.74)***	1.39	Adaptive * Selling orientation * Length	.10 (1.66)**	1.33
R^2		.66	R^2		.67
Adjusted R^2		.63	Adjusted R^2		.64

* p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01 (One-tailed test for hypothesized effects; Two-tailed test for controls)